

REMARKS

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has promulgated new rules governing claims and continuing applications. Among those new rules is 37 C.F.R. § 1.75(b) requiring that an application for an invention be limited to five independent claims and 25 total claims. No first action on the merits has been mailed in the present application and therefore, Applicant is voluntarily reducing the number of claims in the present application to five independent claims and 25 total claims. Also, Applicant is requesting a refund under 37 C.F.R. § 1.117 due to the cancellation of these claims. Applicant reserves the right to resubmit any one or more of the cancelled claims in the present application or in a continuing application and to prosecute those claims fully without regard to the cancellation of these claims in this Preliminary Amendment. In particular, Applicant does not give up any scope of these claims due to their cancellation in the present application.

Claims 1-6, 9-11, 15, 16, and 21-34 remain pending. If the Examiner has any questions, he is encouraged to contact the undersigned at (713) 238-8000.

Respectfully submitted,



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